

Machinery's Handbook



E D I T I O N

*A Reference Book for the Mechanical Engineer,
Designer, Manufacturing Engineer, Draftsman,
Toolmaker, and Machinist*

Machinery's Handbook

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MACHINERY'S HANDBOOK

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plished by means of electrodes suspended directly in the salt bath. The patented grouping and design of electrodes provide an electromagnetic action which results in an automatic stirring action. This stirring tends to produce an even temperature throughout the bath.

Vacuum Furnace: Vacuum heat treatment is a relatively new development in metallurgical processing, with a vacuum substituting for the more commonly used protective gas atmospheres. The most often used furnace is the "cold wall" type, consisting of a water-cooled vessel that is maintained near ambient temperature during operation. During quenching, the chamber is backfilled up to or above atmospheric pressure with an inert gas, which is circulated by an internal fan. When even faster cooling rates are needed, furnaces are available with capability for liquid quenching, performed in an isolated chamber.

Fluidized-Bed Furnace: Fluidized-bed techniques are not new; however, new furnace designs have extended the technology into the temperature ranges required for most common heat treatments. In fluidization, a bed of dry, finely divided particles, typically aluminum oxide, is made to behave like a liquid by feeding gas upward through the bed. An important characteristic of the bed is high-efficiency heat transfer. Applications include continuous or batch-type units for all general heat treatments.

Hardening

Basic Steps in Hardening. — The operation of hardening steel consists fundamentally of two steps. The first step is to heat the steel to some temperature above (usually at least 100 degrees F. above) its transformation point so that it becomes entirely austenitic in structure. The second step is to quench the steel at some rate faster than the critical rate (which depends on the carbon content, the amounts of alloying elements present other than carbon, and the grain size of the austenite) to produce a martensitic structure. The hardness of a martensitic steel depends upon its carbon content and ranges from about 460 Brinell at 0.20 per cent carbon to about 710 Brinell above 0.50 carbon. In comparison, ferrite has a hardness of about 90 Brinell, pearlite about 240 Brinell, and cementite around 550 Brinell.

Critical Points of Decalescence and Recalescence. — The critical or transformation point at which pearlite is transformed into austenite as it is being heated is also called the *decalescence point*. If the temperature of the steel was observed as it passed through the decalescence point, it would be noted that it would continue to absorb heat without appreciably rising in temperature, although the immediate surroundings were hotter than the steel. Similarly, the critical or transformation point at which austenite is transformed back into pearlite upon cooling is called the *recalescence point*. When this point is reached, the steel will give out heat so that its temperature instead of continuing to fall, will momentarily increase.

The recalescence point is lower than the decalescence point by anywhere from 85 to 215 degrees F., and the lower of these points does not manifest itself unless the higher one has first been fully passed. These critical points have a direct relation to the hardening of steel. Unless a temperature sufficient to reach the decalescence point is obtained, so that the pearlite is changed into austenite, no hardening action can take place; and unless the steel is cooled suddenly before it reaches the recalescence point, thus preventing the changing-back again from austenite to pearlite, no hardening can take place. The critical points vary for different kinds of steel and must be determined by tests in each case. It is the variation in the critical points that makes it necessary to heat different steels to different temperatures when hardening.

Hardening Temperatures. — The maximum temperature to which a steel is heated before quenching to harden it is called the hardening temperature. Harden-

ing temperatures vary for different steels and different classes of service, although in general, it may be said that the hardening temperature for any given steel is above the lower critical point of that steel. Just how far above this point the hardening temperature lies for any particular steel depends on three factors: (1) The chemical composition of the steel; (2) the amount of excess ferrite (if the steel has less than 0.85 per cent carbon content) or the amount of excess cementite (if the steel has more than 0.85 per cent carbon content) that is to be dissolved in the austenite; and (3) the maximum grain size permitted, if desired.

The general range of full hardening temperatures for carbon steels is shown by the diagram. This range is merely indicative of general practice and is not intended to represent absolute hardening temperature limits. It can be seen that for steels of less than 0.85 per cent carbon content, the hardening range is above the upper critical point — that is, above the temperature at which all of the excess ferrite has been dissolved in the austenite. On the other hand, for steels of more than 0.85 per cent carbon content, the hardening range lies somewhat below the upper critical point. This indicates that in this hardening range some of the excess cementite still remaining undissolved in the austenite. If steel of more than 0.85 per cent carbon content were heated above the upper critical point and then quenched, the resulting grain size would be excessively large.

At one time it was considered desirable to heat steel only to the minimum temperature at which it would fully harden, one of the reasons being to avoid grain growth that takes place at higher temperature. It is now realized that no such rule as this can be applied generally since there are factors other than hardness which must be taken into consideration. For example, in many cases toughness can be impaired by too low a temperature just as much as by too high a temperature. It is true, however, that too high hardening temperatures result in warpage, distortion, increased scale, and decarburization.

Hardening Temperatures for Carbon Tool Steels. — The best hardening temperatures for any given tool steel are dependent upon the type of tool and the intended class of service. Wherever possible, the specific recommendations of the tool steel manufacturer should be followed. General recommendations for hardening temperatures of carbon tool steels based on carbon content are as follows: For steel of 0.65 to 0.80 per cent carbon content, 1450 to 1550 degrees F.; for steel of 0.80 to 0.95 per cent carbon content, 1410 to 1460 degrees F.; for steel of 0.95 to 1.10 per cent carbon content, 1390 to 1430 degrees F.; and for steels of 1.10 per cent and over carbon content, 1380 to 1420 degrees F. For a given hardening temperature range, the higher temperatures tend to produce deeper hardness penetration and increased compressional strength while the lower temperatures tend to result in shallower hardness penetration but increased resistance to splitting or bursting stresses.

Determining Hardening Temperatures. — A hardening temperature can be specified directly or it may be specified indirectly as a certain temperature rise above the lower critical point of the steel. Where the temperature is specified directly, a pyrometer of the type which indicates the furnace temperature or a pyrometer of the type which indicates the work temperature may be employed. If the pyrometer shows the furnace temperature, care must be taken to allow sufficient time for the work to reach the furnace temperature after the pyrometer indicates that the required hardening temperature has been attained. If the pyrometer indicates work temperature, then where the work-piece is large, time must be allowed for the interior of the work to reach the temperature of the surface which is the temperature indicated by the pyrometer.

Where the hardening temperature is specified as a given temperature rise above the critical point of the steel, a pyrometer which indicates the temperature of the work

should be used. The critical point, as well as the given temperature rise, can be more accurately determined with this type of pyrometer. As the work is heated, its temperature, as indicated by the pyrometer, rises steadily until the lower critical or decarburization point of the steel is reached. At this point, the temperature of the work ceases to rise and the pyrometer indicating or recording pointer remains stationary or fluctuates slightly. After a certain elapsed period, depending upon the heat input rate, the internal changes in structure of the steel that take place at the lower critical point are completed and the temperature of the work again begins to rise. Since a small fluctuation in temperature may occur in the interval during which structural changes are taking place, for uniform practice the critical point may be considered as the temperature at which the pointer first becomes stationary.

Heating Steel in Liquid Baths. — The liquid bath commonly used for heating steel tools preparatory to hardening are molten lead, sodium cyanide, barium chloride, a mixture of barium and potassium chloride and other metallic salts. The molten substance is retained in a crucible or pot and the heat required may be obtained from gas, oil, or electricity. The principal advantages of heating baths are as follows: No part of the work can be heated to a temperature above that of the bath; the temperature can be easily maintained at whatever degree has proved, in practice, to give the best results; the submerged steel can be heated uniformly, and the finished surfaces are protected against oxidation.

Salt Baths. — Molten baths of various salt mixtures or compounds are used extensively for heat-treating operations such as hardening and tempering; they are also utilized for annealing ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Commercial salt-bath mixtures are available that meet a wide range of temperature and other metallurgical requirements. For example, there are neutral baths for heating tool and die steels without carburizing the surfaces; baths for carburizing the surfaces of low-carbon steel parts; baths adapted for the usual tempering temperatures of, say, 300 to 1100 degrees F.; and baths that may be heated to temperatures up to approximately 2400 degrees F. for hardening high-speed steels. Salt baths are also adapted for local or selective hardening, the type of bath being selected to suit the requirements. For example, a neutral bath may be used for annealing the ends of tubing or other parts, or an activated cyanide bath for carburizing the ends of shafts or other parts. Surfaces that are not to be carburized are protected by copper plating. When the work is immersed, the unplated parts are subjected to the carburizing action.

Baths may consist of a mixture of sodium, potassium, barium, and calcium chlorides or nitrates of sodium, potassium, barium, and calcium in varying proportions, to which sodium carbonate and sodium cyanide are sometimes added to prevent decarburization. Various proportions of these salts provide baths of different properties. Potassium cyanide is seldom used as sodium cyanide costs less. The specific gravity of a salt bath is not as high as that of a lead bath; consequently the work may be suspended in a salt bath and does not have to be held below the surface as in a lead bath.

The Lead Bath. — The lead bath is extensively used, but is not adapted to the high temperatures required for hardening high-speed steel, as it begins to vaporize at about 1190 degrees F. As the temperature increases, the lead volatilizes and gives off poisonous vapors; hence, lead furnaces should be equipped with hoods to carry away the fumes. Lead baths are generally used for temperatures below 1500 or 1600 degrees F. They are often employed for heating small pieces that must be hardened in quantities. It is important to use pure lead that is free from sulphur. The work should be pre-heated before plunging it into the molten lead.

Defects in Hardening. — Uneven heating is the cause of most of the defects in hardening. Cracks of a circular form, from the corners or edges of a tool, indicate uneven heating in hardening. Cracks of a vertical nature and dark-colored fissures indicate that the steel has been burned and should be put on the scrap heap. Tools that have hard and soft places have been either unevenly heated, unevenly cooled, or "soaked," a term used to indicate prolonged heating. A tool not thoroughly moved about in the hardening fluid will show hard and soft places, and have a tendency to crack. Tools that are hardened by dropping them to the bottom of the tank sometimes have soft places, owing to contact with the floor or sides.

Scale on Hardened Steel. — The formation of scale on the surface of hardened steel is due to the contact of oxygen with the heated steel; hence, to prevent scale the heated steel must not be exposed to the action of the air. When using an open heating furnace, the flame should be so regulated that it is not visible in the heating chamber. The heated steel should be exposed to the air as little as possible, when transferring it from the furnace to the quenching bath. An old method of preventing scale and retaining a fine finish on dies used in jewelry manufacture, small taps, etc., is as follows: Fill the die impression with powdered boracic acid and place near the fire until the acid melts; then add a little more acid to insure covering all the surfaces. The die is then hardened in the usual way. If the boracic acid does not come out entirely in the quenching bath, immerse the work in boiling water. Dies hardened by this method are said to be as durable as those heated without the acid.

Hardening or Quenching Baths. — The purpose of a quenching bath is to remove heat from the steel being hardened at a rate that is faster than the critical cooling rate. Generally speaking, the more rapid the rate of heat extraction above the cooling rate, the higher will be the resulting hardness. To obtain the different rates of cooling required by different classes of work, baths of various kinds are used. These include plain or fresh water, brine, caustic soda solutions, oils of various classes, oil-water emulsions, baths of molten salt or lead for high-speed steels and air cooling for some high-speed steel tools when a slow rate of cooling is required. To minimize distortion and cracking where such tendencies are present, without sacrificing depth of hardness penetration, a quenching medium should be selected that will cool rapidly at the higher temperatures and more slowly at the lower temperatures, i.e., below 750 degrees F. Oil quenches in general meet this requirement.

Oil Quenching Baths. Oil is used very extensively as a quenching medium as it results in a good proportion of hardness, toughness, and freedom from warpage when used with standard steels. Oil baths are used extensively for alloy steels. Various kinds of oils are employed such as prepared mineral oils and vegetable, animal and fish oils, either singly or in combination. Prepared mineral quenching oils are widely used because they have good quenching characteristics, are chemically stable, do not have an objectionable odor, and are relatively inexpensive. Special compounded oils of the soluble type are used in many plants instead of such oils as fish oil, linseed oil, cottonseed oil, etc. The soluble properties enable the oil to form an emulsion with water.

Oil cools steel at a slower rate than water, but the rate is fast enough for alloy steel. Oils have different cooling rates, however, and this rate may vary through the initial and final stages of the quenching operation. Faster cooling in the initial stage and slower cooling at lower temperatures is preferable because there is less danger of cracking the steel. The temperature of quenching oil baths should range ordinarily between 90 and 130 degrees F. A fairly constant temperature may be maintained either by circulating the oil through cooling coils or by using a tank provided with a cold water jacket.

A good quenching oil should possess a flash and fire point sufficiently high to be safe under the conditions used and 350 degrees F. should be about the minimum. The specific heat of the oil regulates the hardness and toughness of the quenched steel; and the greater the specific heat, the higher will be the hardness produced. Specific heats of quenching oils vary from 0.20 to 0.75, the specific heats of fish, animal and vegetable oils usually being from 0.2 to 0.4, and of soluble mineral oils from 0.5 to 0.7. The efficient temperature range for quenching oil is from 90 to 140 degrees F.

Quenching in Water. — Many carbon tool steels are hardened by immersing them in a bath of fresh water, but water is not an ideal quenching medium. Contact between the water and work and the cooling of the hot steel is impaired by the formation of the gas bubbles or an insulating vapor film especially in holes, cavities or pockets. The result is uneven cooling and in some cases excessive strains which may cause the tool to crack; in fact, there is greater danger of cracking in a fresh water bath than in one containing salt water or brine.

In order to secure more even cooling and reduce danger of cracking, either rock salt (8 or 9 per cent) or caustic soda (3 to 5 per cent) may be added to the bath in order to eliminate or prevent the formation of a vapor film or gas pockets, thus promoting rapid early cooling. Brine is commonly used and $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of rock salt per gallon of water is equivalent to about 8 per cent of salt. Brine is not inherently a more severe or drastic quenching medium than plain water, although it may seem to be because the brine makes better contact with the heated steel and, consequently, cooling is more effective. In still bath quenching, a slow up-and-down movement of the tool is preferable to a violent swishing around.

The temperature of water-base quenching baths should preferably be kept around 70 degrees F., but 70 to 90 or 100 degrees F. is a safe range. The temperature of the hardening bath has a great deal to do with the hardness obtained. The higher the temperature of the quenching water, the more nearly does its effect approach that of oil; and if boiling water is used for quenching, it will have an effect even more gentle than that of oil — in fact, it would leave the steel nearly soft. Parts of irregular shape are sometimes quenched in a water bath that has been warmed somewhat to prevent sudden cooling and cracking.

When water is used, it should be "soft" as unsatisfactory results will be obtained with "hard" water. Any contamination of water-base quenching liquids by soap tends to decrease their rate of cooling. A water bath having 1 or 2 inches of oil on the top is sometimes employed to advantage for quenching tools made of high-carbon steel as the oil through which the work first passes reduces the sudden quenching action of the water.

The bath should be amply large to dissipate the heat rapidly and the temperature should be kept about constant so that successive pieces will be cooled at the same rate. Irregularly shaped parts should be immersed so that the heaviest or thickest section enters the bath first. After immersion, the part to be hardened should be agitated in the bath; the agitation reduces the tendency of the formation of a vapor coating on certain surfaces, and a more uniform rate of cooling is obtained. The work should never be dropped to the bottom of the bath until quite cool.

Flush or Local Quenching by Pressure-spraying. When dies for cold heading, drawing, extruding, etc., or other tools, require a hard working surface and a relatively soft but tough body, the quenching may be done by spraying water under pressure against the interior or other surfaces to be hardened. Special spraying fixtures are used to hold the tool and apply the spray where the hardening is required. The pressure-spray prevents the formation of gas pockets previously referred to in connection with the fresh water quenching bath; hence fresh water is effective for flush quenching and there is no advantage in using brine.

Quenching in Molten Salt Bath. — A molten salt bath may be used in preference to oil for quenching high-speed steel. The object in using a liquid salt bath for quenching (instead of an oil bath) is to obtain maximum hardness with minimum cooling stresses and distortion which might result in cracking expensive tools, especially if there are irregular sections. The temperature of the quenching bath may be around 1100 or 1200 degrees F. Quenching is followed by cooling to room temperature and then the tool is tempered or drawn in a bath having a temperature range of 950 to 1100 degrees F. In many cases, the tempering temperature is about 1050 degrees F.

Tanks for Quenching Baths. — The main point to be considered in a quenching bath is to keep it at a uniform temperature, so that successive pieces quenched will be subjected to the same heat. The next consideration is to keep the bath agitated, so that it will not be of different temperatures in different places; if thoroughly agitated and kept in motion, as is the case with the bath shown in Fig. 1, it is not even necessary to keep the pieces in motion in the bath; as steam will not be likely to form around the pieces quenched. Experience has proved that if a piece is held still in a thoroughly agitated bath, it will come out much straighter than if it has been moved around in an unagitated bath. This is an important consideration, especially when hardening long pieces. It is, besides, no easy matter to keep heavy and long pieces in motion unless it be done by mechanical means.

In Fig. 1 is shown a water or brine tank for quenching baths. Water is forced by pump or other means through the supply pipe into the intermediate space between the outer and inner tank. From the intermediate space it is forced into the inner tank through holes as indicated. The water returns to the storage tank by overflowing from the inner tank into the outer one and then through the overflow pipe as indicated. In Fig. 3 is shown another water or brine tank of a more common type. In this case the water or brine is pumped from the storage tank and continuously returned to it. If the storage tank contains a large volume of water, there is no need of a special means for cooling. Otherwise, arrangements must be made for cooling the water after it has passed through the tank. The bath is agitated by the force with which the water is pumped into it. The holes at A are drilled at an angle, so as to throw the water toward the center of the tank. In Fig. 2 is shown an oil quenching tank in which water is circulated in an outer surrounding tank for keeping the oil bath cool. Air is forced into the oil bath to keep it agitated. Fig. 4 shows the ordinary type of quenching tank cooled by water forced through a coil of pipe. This can be used for oil, water or brine. Fig. 5 shows a similar type of quenching tank, but with two coils of pipe. Water flows through one of these and steam through the other. By these means it is possible to keep the bath at a constant temperature.

Interrupted Quenching. — *Austempering*, *martempering*, and *isothermal quenching* are three methods of interrupted quenching that have been developed to obtain greater toughness and ductility for given hardnesses and to avoid the difficulties of quench cracks, internal stresses, and warpage, frequently experienced when the conventional method of quenching steel directly and rapidly from above the transformation point to atmospheric temperature is employed. In each of these three methods, quenching is begun when the work has reached some temperature above the transformation point and is conducted at a rate faster than the critical rate. The rapid cooling of the steel is interrupted, however, at some temperature above that at which martensite begins to form. The three methods differ in the temperature range at which interruption of the rapid quench takes place, the length of time that the steel is held at this temperature, and whether the subsequent cooling to atmospheric temperature is rapid or slow, and is or is not preceded by a tempering operation.

One of the reasons for maintaining the steel at a constant temperature for a definite period of time is to permit the inside sections of the piece to reach the same temper-

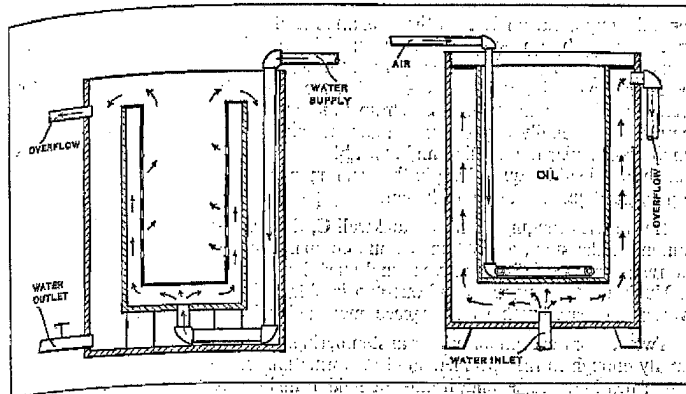


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

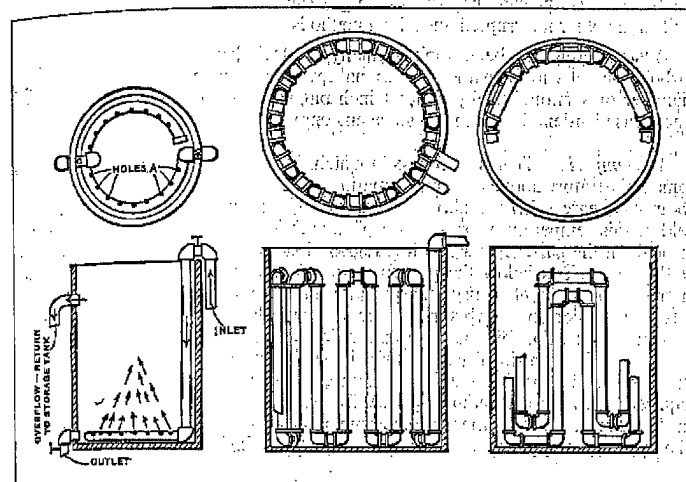


Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

ature as the outer sections so that when transformation of the structure does take place, it will occur at about the same rate and period of time throughout the piece. In order to maintain the constant temperature required in interrupted quenching, a quenching arrangement for absorbing and dissipating a large quantity of heat without increase in temperature is needed. Molten salt baths equipped for water spray or air cooling around the exterior of the bath container have been used for this purpose.

Austempering: This is a heat-treating process in which steels are quenched in a bath maintained at some constant temperature in the range of 350 to 800 degrees F.

depending upon the analysis of the steel and the characteristics to be obtained. Upon immersion in the quenching bath, the steel is cooled more rapidly than the critical quenching rate. When the temperature of the steel reaches that of the bath, however, the quenching action is interrupted. If the steel is now held at this temperature for a predetermined length of time, say, from 10 to 60 minutes, the austenitic structure of the steel is gradually changed into a new structure, called *bainite*. The structure of bainite is acicular (needlelike) and resembles that of tempered martensite such as is usually obtained by quenching in the usual manner to atmospheric temperature and tempering at 400 degrees F. or higher.

Hardnesses ranging up to 60 Rockwell C, depending upon the carbon and alloy content of the steel, are obtainable and compare favorably with those obtained for the respective steels by a conventional quench and tempering to above 400 degrees F. Much greater toughness and ductility is obtained in an austempered piece, however, as compared with a similar piece quenched and tempered in the usual manner.

Two factors are important in austempering. First, the steel must be quenched rapidly enough to the specified sub-transformation temperature to avoid any formation of pearlite, and second, it must be held at this temperature until the transformation from austenite to bainite is completed. Time and temperature transformation curves (called S-curves because of their shape) have been developed for different steels and these provide important data governing the conduct of austempering, as well as the other interrupted quenching methods.

Austempering has been applied chiefly to steels having 0.60 per cent or more carbon content with or without additional low alloy content, and to pieces of small diameter or section, usually under 1 inch but varying with the composition of the steel. Case hardened parts may also be austempered.

Martempering: This is a process in which the steel is first rapidly quenched from some temperature above the transformation point down to some temperature (usually about 400 degrees F.) just above that at which martensite begins to form. It is then held at this temperature for a length of time sufficient to equalize the temperature throughout the part, after which it is removed and cooled in air. As the temperature of the steel drops below the transformation point, martensite begins to form in a matrix of austenite at a fairly uniform rate throughout the piece. The soft austenite acts as a cushion to absorb some of the stresses which develop as the martensite is formed. Because of this fact, the difficulties presented by quench cracks, internal stresses, and dimensional changes are largely avoided, while at the same time, a structure of high hardness can be obtained. If greater toughness and ductility are required, conventional tempering may follow. In general, heavier sections can be hardened more easily by the martempering process than by the austempering process. The martempering process is especially suited to the higher alloyed steels.

Isothermal Quenching: This process resembles austempering in that the steel is first rapidly quenched from above the transformation point down to a temperature which is above that at which martensite begins to form and is held at this temperature until the austenite is completely transformed into bainite. The constant temperature to which the piece is quenched and then maintained is usually 450 degrees F. or above. The process differs from austempering in that after transformation to a bainite structure has been completed, the steel is immersed in another bath and is brought up to some higher temperature, depending upon the characteristics desired, and is maintained at this temperature for a definite period of time, followed by cooling in air. Thus, tempering to obtain the desired toughness or ductility takes place immediately after the structure of the steel has changed to bainite and before it is cooled to atmospheric temperature.